

The weather has given us all a dry January

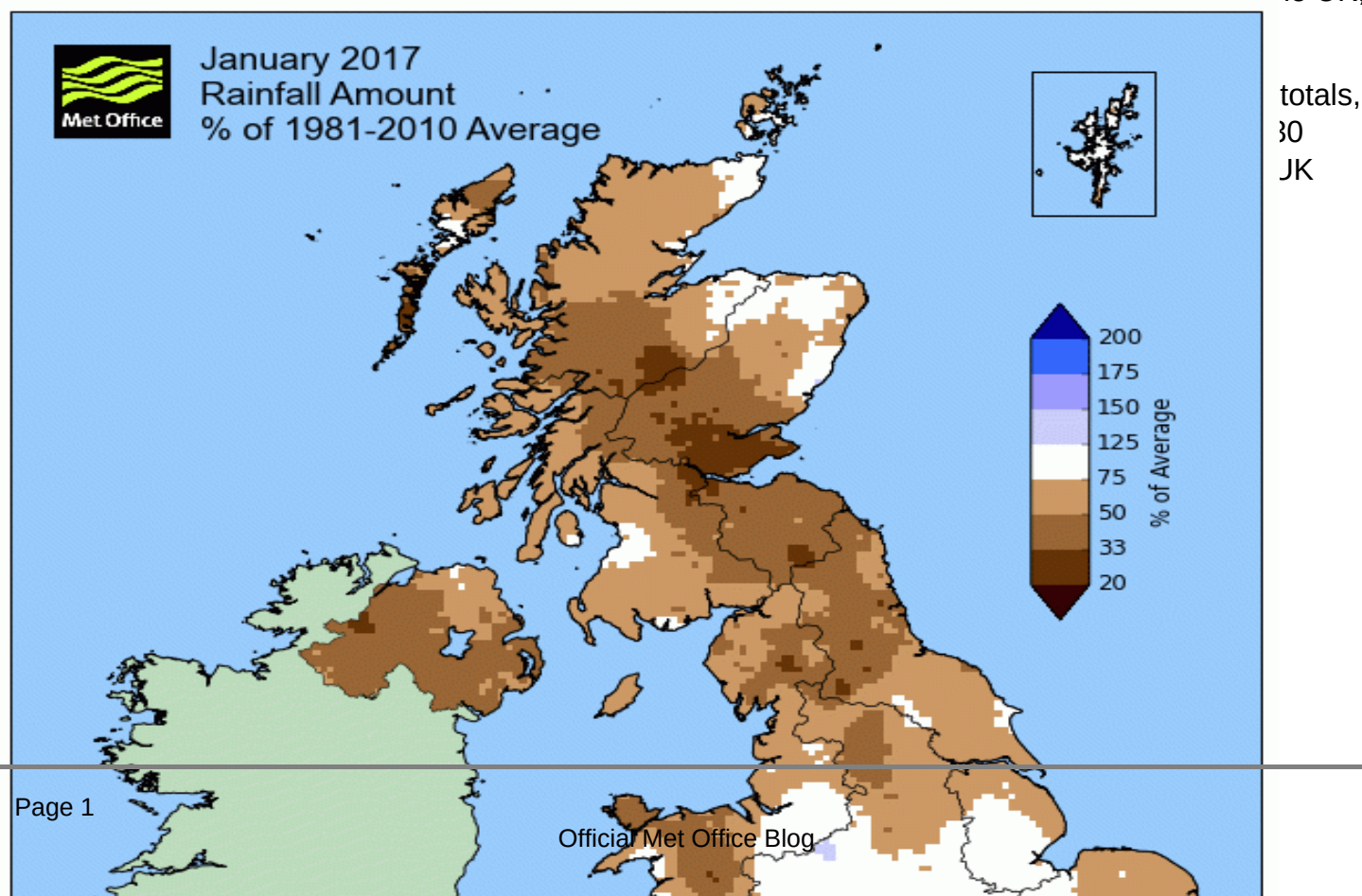
Description

The UK has had its own Dry January, as most parts have experienced lower than average rainfall during the month.

Provisional January 2017 data	Mean temp (°C)		Sunshine (hours)		Rainfall (mm)	
	Actual	Diff to avg	Actual	% of avg	Actual	% of avg
UK	3.9	0.2	56.5	120	75.5	62
England	3.8	-0.3	63.7	117	63.9	77
Wales	4.5	0.4	50.2	103	93.5	59
Scotland	3.6	1	48.5	135	93.7	53
N Ireland	5.1	0.9	45.3	102	53.3	46

As a whole, the UK has witnessed just under two thirds (62%) of the average rainfall for January, when compared to the period between 1981 and 2010. However, the UK overview masks the detail, and drilling down into the figures reveal that some parts have received less than half the average rainfall for the month.

When compared with the long-term average Kinross in Scotland was the driest area during January 2017, as only 25% of the average January rainfall fell during the month, amounting to just under 34mm. In contrast the wettest place relative to the long-term average was the Isle of Wight where 34% more rain fell than in an average January. Ruteshire recorded the highest amount of rainfall for the UK,



Mark McCarthy is the head of the Met Office National Climate Information Centre. He said: "Rainfall across the UK during January has been generally low. A few locations in the south and east have recorded more than average rainfall, but some areas have received less than one third of the average amount for January. Some regions, such as Northern Ireland, which had recorded very low rainfall during the month saw a recovery in rainfall in the last couple of days of the month."

Provisional figures from October 2016 to January 2017 show that these four months have been the second driest October-January in a series stretching back to 1910. The lack of rainfall wasn't evenly spread across the UK and the statistics from some countries feature more highly than others. Northern Ireland, for example, experienced its driest October to January period in the whole series (back to 1910), while England over the same period was the driest since 1991/92 and 8th driest in the series.

- **UK** total October-January rainfall was 314.8 mm, and the only year it was drier was in 1962-63 with 265.3 mm.
- **England** driest since 1991/92, ranked equal-8th overall
- **Wales** driest since 1962/63, ranked 2nd overall
- **Scotland** driest since 1962/63, ranked 2nd overall
- **Northern Ireland** driest in the whole series since 1910 (beating 1962/63 by quite a clear margin)

Sunshine

The majority of the UK recorded more sunshine than normal for January. Scotland recorded a 35% increase in sunshine compared with the average between 1981–2010. With 63.7 hours England recorded the most sunshine, and as you may expect the sunniest days were observed in southern England, with 8.4 hours at Culdrose, in Cornwall, on 23 January and also at East Malling in Kent on 18 January.

Temperatures

Locations in Scotland recorded the UK's highest and lowest daily temperatures. Achfary, in Sutherland, and Plockton, in Ross & Cromarty, recorded 14.2 °C on 25 January, while five days later Braemar, in Aberdeenshire, recorded -10.1 °C as the lowest minimum temperature on 30 January.

The mean temperatures for Northern Scotland were 1.3 °C higher than the long-term January average, while average temperatures in Kent were -1.3 °C below the January average.

Dr Mark McCarthy added: "The reversal of anticipated temperatures with northern Scotland being, on average, warmer than south-east England is largely due to the area of high pressure which sat over continental Europe. This pool of dense cold air had a strong influence on those parts of Britain closest to Europe."

Recently we've seen a return to more unsettled weather, with further rain and strong winds forecast for some areas over the next few days. Looking ahead to next week: after a changeable start with temperatures generally around average, there are some signs that from midweek we will see a return to more settled, drier and probably colder conditions, however details about this will change over the coming days.

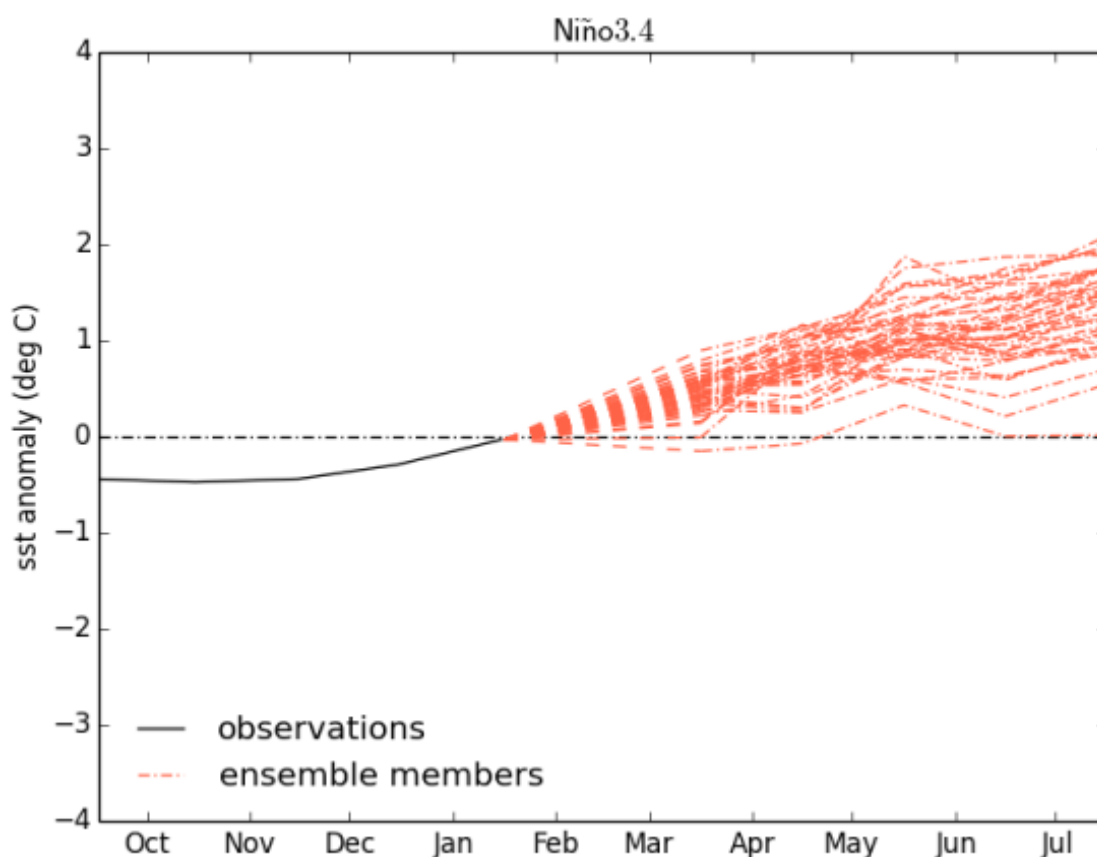
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Another El Niño on the way?

Description

In the waters of the far-eastern equatorial Pacific – close to the South American coast – sea-surface temperatures are beginning to rise, prompting some climate scientists to believe the world could be heading for another El Niño in close succession to the previous event which ended last year.



This diagram illustrates the observed sea surface temperature for a central region of the tropical Pacific (in black), and the evolution predicted by the Met Office dynamical long-range ensemble forecast system (in red). A typical threshold for El Niño is for the sea surface temperature anomaly to be above 0.5 °C.

The last El Niño, which peaked in the winter of 2015-2016, was the joint strongest event on record. It had impacts around the world and the heat released from it added to existing climate change to break global surface temperature records in 2015 and 2016.

Prof Adam Scaife, head of long-range prediction at the Met Office Hadley Centre said: "The El Niño–La Niña cycle hasn't been very active this winter, but Met Office predictions and those from some other

centres are suggesting an increased risk of an El Niño developing by the summer.”

It isn't unknown for El Niños to occur in [close succession](#): events developed just two years apart in 1963 and 1965, and have even developed in consecutive years before, in 1986 and 1987. However, the level of warming in current predictions of the tropical Pacific is unusual for this time of year.

Commenting on the likelihood of another El Niño peaking at the end of this year, Prof. Scaife urged caution: “It is very early days and [forecasts](#) made at this time of year have great uncertainty, so we are just flagging the raised risk of an event at this stage, given the global consequences if it does occur.”

Any El Niño event (which is the warm phase of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation) has impacts on the global climate. If an El Niño does grow by summer some of the earliest impacts will be on the Atlantic hurricane season and the Indian monsoon, both of which tend to weaken during a developing El Niño.

You can learn more about the [El Niño – La Niña](#) cycle and its impacts on our web pages.

The World Meteorological Organization's ENSO outlook is available [here](#).

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Life and death and community: farming and the 1947 winter

Description

At times the weather can be challenging for everyone, but farmers are always on the front line. That was certainly the case 70 years ago in 1947 with the coldest February on record going back to 1910. In a guest blog post Ceris Jones of the National Farmers Union captures memories from NFU members and others involved in farming of that winter and the hardships caused to the farming community.

Just as John Meredith, BBC agricultural news reporter-to-be came into the world in the upstairs bedroom of the family home – because his mother was snowed in – large numbers of sheep were trapped in snowdrifts across the country.

Three million sheep died in the [severe winter of 1947](#). According to Erwyd Howells, hardy weather-beaten shepherds were reduced to tears at the loss of a life's work and finally beaten by the weather. And it wasn't just the snow. Tony Evans recalls that getting water for their livestock was especially difficult because the water supply kept freezing. His parents would spend all day battling to look after their animals.



The winter of 1947 brought challenging conditions for many across the UK, in town and

country alike. Picture courtesy Bolton News.

Janet Henthorn's brother was born as it started to snow in January. Mother and son were eventually able to tackle the journey home to the family's remote smallholding. At the top of the first field, her mother stopped to check on the baby, who was wrapped in a fur coat, and found to her horror that he was no longer there. She hurriedly re-traced her steps and near the bottom of the field lay Janet's new brother – a little cold, but unhurt. It didn't deter Janet's parents – they had two more girls and another boy – but not one was born in January.

The snow made it impossible to get milk from John Thomas' family farm to the processing plant, but the excess milk was put to good use by his grandmother. She made butter and cheese and there was still lots of milk to drink for the three generations of family and farm workers trapped by the snow.

Lord Henry Plumb who was 22 years old at the time, recalls using his tractor to deliver bread straight through the first-floor windows of the houses in his local Warwickshire village. This was just after the Second World War and people were used to helping each other. And villages were more self-sufficient then, many with a local baker and butcher.

Then came the thaw. The flooding which ensued significantly affected the East Anglian Fens: Rex Sly's home. Food was already in short supply and faced with the prospect of not producing a crop from the following harvest, the government drafted in troops and thousands of pumps to repair breaches in banks and to get the water away. Almost all the Fens were sown with crops that spring, an extraordinary triumph over adversity.

The Met Office would like to thank the following NFU members for sharing their memories of the 1947 winter: Tony Evans (Essex); Janet Henthorn (Lancashire); Lord Henry Plumb (Warwickshire); Rex Sly (Lincolnshire); and also Erwyd Howells (Ceredigion); and John Meredith and John Thomas (Glamorgan).

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